



# Portfields—The Wave of the Future



*A scenic view of Bellingham, Washington's waterfront, one of the three selected Portfields Pilot Ports*

## Portfields

The announcement of the Portfields Initiative at the 2003 Brownfields conference underlined a renewed commitment to revitalizing port communities across the country. The Initiative, a partnership between EPA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and five other federal agencies, focuses on the revitalization of port communities and marine transportation, as well as the protection of the coastal environment. Three EPA Brownfields Assessment Pilot grant recipients—New Bedford, Massachusetts; Tampa, Florida; and Port of Bellingham, Washington—were selected as Portfields Pilot Ports due to their strong commitment to waterfront revitalization, innovative approaches to facility planning and habitat restoration, and proven success in partnering with federal agencies. These port communities have shown that blighted, abandoned waterfront properties can be transformed into centers for industry and tourism.

With the expectation that maritime trade will double by the year 2020, businesses are looking for viable waterfront locations for their manufacturing, shipping, and tourist trades. In the past, as waterfront manufacturing interests changed or went abroad, these properties were abandoned and communities were left with fewer jobs, increased poverty, and properties with perceived contamination preventing redevelopment. Revitalizing ports by addressing these waterfront properties increases business trade, and returns revenue and jobs to depressed communities.

In order to generate these benefits of waterfront redevelopment, the Portfields Initiative's federal partners are working to provide targeted resources to assist the three designated Pilot Ports. NOAA is providing each Pilot Port with \$30,000 to support general implementation of the Initiative, such as kick-off meetings; EPA is providing targeted brownfields assessment assistance of up to \$50,000, based on specific needs; and the Economic Development Administration could potentially invest in each Port, offering financial assistance for economic development planning, market feasibility analysis, and port infrastructure improvements. Other federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Maritime Administration, are also offering technical and administrative assistance.

EPA has provided Brownfields grants to more than 140 communities in which waterfront revitalization was part of ultimate redevelopment

## JUST THE FACTS:

- Three EPA Brownfields Assessment Pilot grant recipients—New Bedford, Massachusetts; Tampa, Florida; and Port of Bellingham, Washington—have been selected as Portfields Pilot ports, in part due to their proven success in partnering with federal agencies.
- With its Portfields designation, the City of New Bedford will focus on ways to develop its aquaculture industry, improve shipping access, and redevelop additional properties for recreational or commercial purposes.
- Tampa's Portfields designation will assist the city in identifying potential sources of funding and technical assistance, to enable redevelopment, improve economic productivity, and enhance social conditions.

*The Portfields Initiative is a partnership between EPA, NOAA, and five other federal agencies to revitalize port communities and protect the coastal environment. EPA has already provided Brownfields grants to more than 140 communities in which waterfront revitalization was part of ultimate redevelopment goals, creating more than 13,000 cleanup and redevelopment-related jobs and leveraging nearly \$3 billion.*

goals. Overall, these grants have created more than 13,000 cleanup and redevelopment-related jobs and leveraged nearly \$3 billion. EPA, along with the other Portfields federal agencies, will work closely with the three chosen ports to further create jobs, leverage funding, and redevelop precious waterfront areas.

## Port of New Bedford, Massachusetts

Located near the Atlantic Ocean at the convergence of the Acushnet River estuary and Buzzards Bay in southeastern Massachusetts, New Bedford is a prime location for renewed, waterside business interests. Previously, New Bedford's textile, apparel, and fishing industries departed due to international competition and changes in federal fishing regulations. As with other port communities, these circumstances left New Bedford with a decreasing population, and high unemployment and poverty rates.

New Bedford has made great strides by focusing on redeveloping its mixed-use port area. Following assessments funded by EPA's Brownfields Assessment Pilot grant, cleanup has been completed at the former Alden Corrugated property, wherein one parcel will undergo additional assessment activities, the second parcel was sold to an adjacent health club, and the third parcel has been sold to a local specialty produce business to build a greenhouse. Additionally, the 25-acre Standard Times property is now a 12-lot subdivision where EPA-funded assessments showed only three parcels in need of cleanup, two of which have already been cleaned, and construction is completed or underway on two others. With \$400,000 in Assessment Pilot funding and Targeted Brownfields Assessment funding of \$75,000 from EPA, the New Bedford Brownfields Assessment Pilot has leveraged \$6.5 million in redevelopment funds and \$1 million in cleanup funds, primarily from the City of New Bedford. Pilot funds allowed the city to create an inventory and database of potential Brownfields properties and have helped to assess twelve properties, creating or retaining 30 jobs. These are but a few examples of what New Bedford has been able to accomplish with so little.

Scott Alfonse, Director, City of New Bedford Department of Environmental Stewardship, noted that with the initial \$400,000 in assessment funding provided by EPA, they learned an important lesson regarding their city's situation—"most sites were not as bad as initially thought." This realization provided "a foundation" for New Bedford to build upon. With the addition of the Portfields designation and federal support, New Bedford's plan focuses on ways to develop its aquaculture industry by implementing the comprehensive New Bedford/Fairhaven Harbor Plan. This plan emphasizes a cooperative agency approach to dredging the harbor of sediments in order to improve shipping access as well as targeting land-based properties for recreational or commercial reuse.

## Port of Tampa, Florida

Florida's largest port, Tampa is the economic center of the state's west central coast, handling nearly 50 million tons of cargo with an estimated value of \$13 billion annually. Tampa's EPA Brownfields Pilot grant targeted abandoned and underutilized industrial properties along the waterfront on Tampa Bay, on the east side of downtown. Industrial and seaport activities had moved out of this area to more desirable areas outside the urban core of the city. The bay is a unique estuary where salt and fresh water mix, supporting one of the world's most productive ecosystems that includes hundreds of species of fish, dolphins, sea turtles, and manatees. Preliminary environmental assessments have been conducted on a few brownfields, and the city has performed extensive



*The Tampa Pilot Port is targeting this abandoned property among others*

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public outreach to notify property owners in the targeted area that their properties could be assessed using EPA funds.

Tampa's comprehensive redevelopment strategy covers wide and far-reaching goals. Specifically, the plan includes identifying potential sources of funding and technical assistance to enable redevelopment as well as improve economic productivity and social conditions. According to Dave Parsché, Environmental Director, Tampa Port Authority, thanks to the additional financial support that comes with the Portfields designation, redevelopment will change the area from "heavy industry to commercial... [and also] restore the bay's valuable coastal resources."

## Port of Bellingham, Washington

Bellingham is a small coastal community located on Bellingham Bay, midway between Seattle and Vancouver. Through its Brownfields Assessment Pilot grant, the Port of Bellingham has made great advances on its Central Waterfront Redevelopment Project, which was designed to facilitate the cleanup and redevelopment of a 50-acre central waterfront area. A number of properties within the area were identified as potentially contaminated due to past uses. These properties include the 20-acre Roeder Avenue Landfill, which received waste from a nearby pulp and paper mill. The project resulted in a 250,000-square-foot tissue storage warehouse, which was constructed between 1996 and 2000 and now functions as an environmental cap for a portion of the landfill. With an investment of \$200,000 from EPA, an additional \$14 million in redevelopment funds and nearly \$2 million in cleanup funds were leveraged from sources that include the owner of the pulp and paper mill.

Under Portfields, there are additional properties that could be redeveloped in the central and other waterfront areas. Mike Stoner, Director of Environmental Programs, Port of Bellingham, is "hoping new attention from federal agencies will help bring new ideas and resources into our effort to implement a comprehensive redevelopment strategy." Port of Bellingham's sustainable waterfront approach emphasizes three principles: environmental quality, economic vitality, and community enrichment. Long-range plans include environmental cleanup of industrial property and federal navigation channels, restoration of habitat for endangered salmon species, expansion of Bellingham's Coast Guard Station, a feasibility evaluation for a waterfront stewardship institute, design and construction of transportation infrastructure to accommodate waterfront redevelopment, and solutions for port security concerns.

With a combined total of more than \$20 million in redevelopment and nearly \$3 million in cleanup funding leveraged, as well as nearly 30 jobs created, the accomplishments of these three Pilot Ports are already impressive. What they have done to improve their communities' environmental, social, and economic situations is inspiring. Imagine what they will be able to accomplish with their new Portfields designations and targeted assistance from seven federal agencies.

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